



ST. CLOUD, MN – Yesterday we were in Mankato, MN – a college town 80 miles southwest of Minneapolis – where I happened to go to undergrad. Adam will do a more-extensive post about our time in MN this Sunday but I wanted to share a bit about how much I was struck by how my views have progressed in the past six years.

Sitting down to type this out I realize that this post could very easily become lengthy, so I'll do my best to resist that temptation. Instead, I'll leave the details for our book we plan to write after we get off the road in a month (if we believe this story worthy of a few pages).

I graduated from MSU in the spring of 2003 with a double major in Law Enforcement and Ethnic Studies and a minor in Sociology. I was president of MSU's Alpha Phi Sigma chapter – the national criminal justice honor society, an active member of the Ethnic Studies Student Organization, a member of the group that represented students in my department to a college board and was part of a group that received a Volunteer of the Year award from the local Salvation Army location. (And I still had time for full course loads, the gym and metal shows in the Twin Cities.)

At that time I thought the best way I could make a positive impact would be through bringing new ideas that respected rights and improved efficiency and transparency to the law enforcement profession. After doing ride-alongs with a number of police departments, tours of prisons, an internship with the St. Paul Police Department and personal reading, I felt policing was very reactive, wasteful and focused on victimless crimes. Yet, I believed that after graduating I could become employed with a large police department, work up the ranks and start making some changes.



I went to grad school for the same discipline. At that time I'd already written-off working for any federal law enforcement agency because I couldn't agree with any of their mission statements. And after continued thinking (thanks in large part to being active with a great group of fellow-libertarians on campus) about how the criminal justice system works I concluded that I could not work for any police department and I accepted a job offer with a private surveillance company.

But then, a couple of months prior to graduation, I received an email response from the Cato Institute regarding my application to intern there in the Spring of 2005. I had been accepted.



I decided to give up the stability the existing position represented and seize this opportunity. And it's a decision I've never

regretted nor an experience I never stop appreciating (thank you Krystal Slivinski, then-intern coordinator at Cato, for selecting me and to my folks for supporting me!!). After my time at Cato I was able to stay involved in the libertarian think tank world in DC for the next four years – until Jason and I decided to hit the road – thinking that we could have a bigger impact bringing this message of freedom and responsibility to people via the Motorhome Diaries.

Yesterday, when walking MSU's campus with Adam and Jason I realized just how much I've grown – to become what I think is a more honest and moral person. I dedicated years of my life to the formal study of law enforcement, thinking that was the best route to bring about positive change. Now I advocate working outside the system entirely as, by definition, it relies on violence.



As is clear, life is unpredictable. I want to encourage everyone reading this to take chances. To not just exist but to live. To think for yourself and live free and morally. As for law enforcement, I now believe that like any good or service, it could better be provided through voluntary interactions. That the incentives inherent when real competition exists is crucial to bettering quality, lowering cost and creating accountable. For more on this I encourage you to check out our [Principles By Which We Live post](#).

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